

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 01961 161016Z

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ACTION EA-09

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, KS

SUBJECT: CATHOLIC RESPONSE TO ROKG'S ACTION IN INDEPENDENCE DAY
AFFAIR

1. EVENING OF 15 MARCH AT INVITATION OF CARDINAL KIM,
APPROXIMATELY 250 CLERGY AND 2,000 FAITHFUL ATTENDED SPECIAL
MASS AND PRAYER SERVICE AT MYONGDONG CATHEDRAL FOR SEVEN
PRIESTS ACCUSED BY GOVERNMENT TOGETHER WITH OTHERS OF
CONSPIRING TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT. CARDINAL KIM GAVE
NON-INFLAMMATORY SERMON IN WHICH ACCORDING TO THOSE PRESENT, HE
LIKENED PRIEST'S SACRIFICE TO THAT OF CHRIST IN THAT THEY MUST
MAKE SACRIFICE BECAUSE THEY HAVE DIFFERENT VIEWS THAN
AUTHORITIES. AT END OF MASS, OFFICIAL STATEMENT ISSUED
BY CONFERENCE OF BISHOPS ON INDEPENDENCE DAY AFFAIR WAS
DISTRIBUTED. ROUGH UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION OF STATEMENT
FOLLOWS:

BEGIN QUOTE:

STATEMENT CONCERNING MARCH 1ST COMMEMORIAL PRAYER CASE

1. BECAUSE OF THE MARCH 1ST COMMEMORIAL PRAYER MEETING,
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THREE PRIESTS WERE BOOKED AND ARRESTED AND FOUR OTHER

PRIESTS WERE BOOKED WITHOUT BEING ARRESTED. ACCORDING TO THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE PROSECUTOR, THEY PLOTTED AND MANEUVERED TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT IN ORDER TO SEIZE POLITICAL POWER IN COLLABORATION WITH SEVERAL OPPOSITION POLITICIANS, PROTESTANT PASTORS, AND SEVERAL FORMER COLLEGE PROFESSORS. WE KNOW THAT THESE PRIESTS HAVE BEEN CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THEIR PRAYERS, SINCE THE YEAR BEFORE LAST, DEMANDING REALIZATION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. WE BELIEVE THAT SUCH ACTIONS OF THEIRS HAVE GROWN OUT OF A JUDGMENT BASED ON CHRISTIAN BELIEF AND PATRIOTISM. HOWEVER, THEY HAVE NEVER PLOTTED TO OVERTHROW THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IN ANY SENSE, NOR WAS THIS THEIR INTENT AT THE PRAYER MEETING COMMEMORATING THE MARCH 1ST INDEPENDENCE UPRISING. ACCORDINGLY, WE WERE GREATLY SHOCKED TO HEAR THE (PROSECUTOR'S) ANNOUNCEMENT WHICH GIVES THE IMPRESSION THAT THE PRIESTS INVOLVED IN THE CASE CONSPIRED TO OVERTHROW THE PRESENT REGIME.

2. WE HEREBY URGE THE GOVERNMENT TO CONDUCT A FAIR TRIAL IN THIS CASE IN THE FUTURE. THIS MEANS THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD GUARANTEE OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL THE PERSONS BOOKED TO DEFEND THEIR POSITIONS FULLY.

3. WE ARE GOING TO WATCH CAREFULLY THE PROGRESS OF THIS CASE, AND WE ARE ALSO GOING TO PRAY, SO THAT THE LIGHT OF JUSTICE OF THE LORD MAY SHINE OVER, NOT ONLY THE PRIESTS AND CHURCHES INVOLVED, BUT ALSO THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE. ALL PRAYERS ABOUT THE CURRENT SITUATION TO BE GIVEN IN THE FUTURE SHALL BE CONDUCTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GUIDELINE OF ACTIONS OF THE PRIESTS FORMULATED ON FEBRUARY 28, 1975.

KOREAN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF BISHOPS

END QUOTE.

COMMENT: BISHOP'S STATEMENT IS NOTEWORTHY FOR ITS MODERATE TONE. WHILE BISHOPS DID NOT ACCEPT GOVERNMENT'S CONTENTION THAT PRIESTS WERE INVOLVED IN PLOT TO OVERTHROW GOVERNMENT, THEY RECOGNIZED GOVERNMENT'S RIGHT TO TRY THOSE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 SEOUL 01961 161016Z

INVOLVED. NCCK HAS YET TO TAKE OFFICIAL STAND ON GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO MARCH 1 AFFAIR. NCCK GENSEC KIM KWON-SOK SAID HE WOULD TRY GET SUPPORT FOR STATEMENT FROM MEMBER CHURCHES WHEN EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETS MARCH 19. HE TOLD EMBOFF THAT NCCK WOULD LIKELY HIT AT GOVERNMENT'S CONTENTION THAT RELIGION AND POLITICS MUST BE SEPARATED. SNEIDER

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